


Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST



The Meaning of Salvation

DANGER: ENGAGE BRAIN
BEFORE OPENING MOUTH

THE SOFT ANSWER

PEACE

HABITS

MEDITATIONS ON THE WORD

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

CHARACTER

Megiddo Message

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Percy J. Thatcher, Editor
A religious magazine, devoted to the cause of Christ and published for the dissemination of Bible truth alone. The MEGIDDO MESSAGE will

- Strengthen your faith in the Bible
- Answer perplexing religious questions
- Give you courage for these uncertain times
- Help you live above the world's moral corruption
- Reveal to you how to develop a character acceptable to God
- Bring peace and stability to your life

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THE LORD NEEDS YOU

I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord,
Real service is what I desire;
I'll say what you want me to say, dear Lord,
But don't ask me to sing in the choir.
I'll be what you want me to be, dear Lord,
I like to see things come to pass,
But don't ask me the Gospel to spread,
dear Lord,
I'm not of the "Gospellers" class.
I'll give the good work a hand, dear Lord,
When I get a little more time;
But just now—you know how it is, dear Lord—
I must earn some more dollars and dimes.
I'll do what you want me to do, dear Lord,
I yearn for the Kingdom to thrive,
And as soon as I've filled all my barns, dear Lord,
I'll sponsor a "Kingdom Drive."

SERIES:

PART II

What Must We Do to be Saved?

The Meaning of Salvation

WHAT does salvation mean to a Christian? Is it a present gift or a future reward? According to the Gospels and the Epistles to the early Church it is, in reality, both.

The term "salvation," in the fullest sense, means to be saved for time and eternity. It is the reward laid up in store for the overcomer, to be given him by Jesus at His return to earth. Jesus' own promise is: "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me to give every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22:12). Once full salvation has been bestowed upon a person he is placed beyond the reach of death. He has been given immortality, made equal to the angels so he cannot die. No pain can come to him, he can suffer no discomfort, he will never again be sick, no situation that could produce mental anguish can ever arise, and it will be impossible for him to sin. His reward will be exceeding, abundantly above all that he can ask or think (Eph. 3:20).

However, in the Gospels and the Epistles, introduction to the way of salvation, acquaintance with the heavenly Father's will as revealed by His Son, and finally the resolve to enter that way and pursue the goal of eternal life, so completely alters one's course of life that he is said to be saved. Knowledge has saved him from ignorance; light from darkness. After Jesus had expounded the way of life to Zacchaeus, He said to him, "This day is salvation come to this house" (Luke 19:9). For Zacchaeus this event was the beginning of a new way of life. Paul's conversion by Christ saved him from his ruthless past as he often testified, "He hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling." "According to his mercy he saved us, . . . that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (II Tim. 1:9; Tit. 3:5-7). In I Cor. 1:18 and II Cor. 2:15 the same thought is expressed. He used the words, "we are saved." Paul, in Eph. 2:5, 8, is strongest in indicating that salvation is a present possession. We need only to read the beginning of the chapter to realize that he speaks of our being saved from the numerous forms of worldliness, and not that this salvation is eternal life.

Note how he tells the Ephesians of their former condition. They were "dead in trespasses and sins," they "walked according to the course of this world"; "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and mind"; "were by nature children of wrath, even as others." But God in His mercy and love elevated them to sit together in heavenly places. From the hopeless condition of the world they were saved or delivered and, as expressed in verse 7, the exceeding riches of His grace, or the reward of life eternal, is to be shown or granted in the "ages to come." The real salvation is *future*.

This present salvation which they had secured did not liberate them instantaneously from sin, for Paul later confessed in his letter to the Philippians that he was not yet morally perfect but was striving for that goal (Phil. 3:12-14). Also in Romans 7 he talked at length about

his own weaknesses, nor was this salvation an immediate exchange of mortality for immortality, for the apostles, like the prophets and patriarchs before them, died and were buried.

What was this great boon which God bestowed upon man? What reaction did it bring about in the individual? How did it affect his life and the lives which touched his? And finally, what future, eternal benefits did it offer?

Deliverance from Darkness

In the days of the early Church the Gentile world was steeped in darkness and superstition. There was great need of spiritual light. The Jews were in a somewhat different position. They had the Law and the Prophets and understood to a degree the workings and the requirements of the Almighty. In this they had a great advantage over the Gentiles if only they had availed themselves of it. But their misunderstanding of the Scriptures and their formality of worship kept the great majority of them in ignorance.

But now, faced with the Church's intense missionary campaign, that which had been partially disclosed to them was made clear as day. The darkness was past. The true light was shining. Christ's coming and His manifesting Himself as the Messiah, together with the gospel of salvation, was making a profound difference. To accept Jesus as the Christ and the gospel of the Kingdom was to pass from darkness into His marvelous light. The Jews by understanding Christ, learned more of God; and the Gentiles by accepting Christ were freed from the worship of dumb idols. They could now walk in the light as He is in the light, and no longer remain in darkness (John 12:45, 46; I John 1:7). They now were delivered from the power of darkness and had no fellowship with the works of darkness (Col. 1:13; Eph. 5:11).

Understanding and believing the gospel of salvation brought also deliverance from fear of demons and evil spirits. Such fears were widespread in the early days of Christianity as they still are to some extent today. People afflicted with such fears felt their utter helplessness to cope with them. Not that demons and evil spirits existed, but people's imaginations were filled with them and their fears were real. It took the knowledge of Christ and the gospel to expel these fears and superstitions in that day and it still works today.

Deliverance from Sin

The world into which Christianity entered was morally corrupt. We get a fair understanding of that world from Paul's words to the Romans (1:21-32) and to the Corinthians (I Cor. 6:9-11). In such surroundings Christianity did what it professed to do. It was the purpose of the Messiah through the preaching of the gospel to save men from this present evil world (Gal. 1:4;

I Thess. 1:10; Rom. 5:9). The gospel did just that. It did not, however, profess to make in an instant, morally perfect beings, but it did claim that persons who submitted themselves to Christ by wholly believing in Him and His mission, were lifted out of the region of sin and moral decay and placed, as it were, in a new world, wherein by the power of the gospel they might be healed and transformed into nothing less than divine perfection.

With Jesus' coming a new world of moral and religious powers was brought into being. "The law and the prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and every one enters it violently" (Luke 16:16, R.S.V.). Those who accepted Jesus' message had, as it were, begun a new life. They received the gospel with the eagerness of little children (Matt. 18:3). They became new creatures, the old passing away and all things becoming new (II Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:16). They put on the new nature created in the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness (Eph. 4:24). They were no longer conformed to the world but transformed by the renewing of their minds; they walked in newness of life (Rom. 12:2; 6:4).

From the beginning the disciples' message warned of a coming doom. Believers, then, were to sever all ties which might bind them to that which they had forsaken. Sins were to be broken off; they were to be dead to them (Col. 3:3-5; Rom. 6:11; I Pet. 4:1). Even things not in themselves sinful were to be renounced if they threatened the integrity of a disciple's devotion to the Kingdom (Rom. 14:21; I Cor. 8:13; 10:23). And once having begun in the way of Christ there was no returning (Luke 9:62; I Cor. 9:27); the only course was and is *forward*.

But while they were to separate themselves outwardly from the world and have no love for its evils, yet they had a moral obligation. What Christ through the gospel had done for them they were to go and do for others. The love they had experienced from the Master they were to extend to those in sin, to those weary and heavy laden with the burdens of life. They were to demonstrate love in action, seeking all who would come, and integrating believers from all nations into a united brotherhood.

True to Jesus' invitation the weary and heavy laden who came to Him found rest for their souls; they found redemption and forgiveness of sins (Matt. 11:28; Col. 1:14). For the gospel deals with man as he stands in this world, to the uttermost of his need, to the utmost of his capacity to receive it. According as he has faith in God and allows it to work freely within him, it can be done unto him.

Thus deliverance from sin was meaningful to them, in that it gave meaning and purpose in this life and promised the life to come.

"We are God's Children Now"

The world to which the gospel of salvation was first preached was composed of men living in alienation from God, and as such, they did not give human life its proper value nor human beings their proper rank. Independence and the value of the individual were crushed beneath oppression, and liberties to the common people were unknown. The Jews, of course, claimed to be a superior race, and to stand high in favor with God, but a claim to spiritual rank grounded merely on ancestral descent defeats

itself. The social condition of the Roman world was such that all dignity and security of man depended upon the accident of birth and fortune.

The situation was absolutely changed for those who received the gospel and believed in Christ as the future Saviour of the world. This fact cannot be overstressed. They had entered a new life. Man had fellowship with God. By the knowledge they received and by their faith they gained a rank with which the decorations of the world are paltry and unreal. This sense of human dignity is stressed in all the teachings of Jesus. He called His disciples, not servants, but friends (John 15:14, 15), and thenceforth this honor belonged to all who believed in Him.

The highest rank known on earth and which carried with it the most sacred and religious privileges were the kingship and priesthood; yet now this was promised to the humblest believer in Jesus, to the slave-girl as equally as the Roman patrician or a Jewish noble (Rev. 1:5, 6). By the act of faith and obedience to the gospel men and women, whatever their earthly status, enter into a filial relationship with God. The gospel makes a man, not a servant, but a son; not a doorkeeper, but a child in the Father's house. This is Jesus' assurance to His disciples. "See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called the children of God; and so we are. . . . Beloved, we are God's children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (I John 3:1, 3, R.S.V.). Paul possessed the same assurance, for he said, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" (Rom. 8:14-17). Children of God! That's what true believers are now. The change to immortality comes with Jesus' return.

Christian Attitude Concerning Suffering and Death

The world which saw the Roman Empire erect itself above shattered cities and states and an unwholesome society plant itself upon varied masses of enslaved humanity could not but be full of pain. There was extreme sensitiveness to suffering. Body and soul cried out for relief and tortured humanity demanded comfort. Nothing in the Hellenic-Roman world that was attempted was substantial to constitute a world remedy.

But the message concerning Christ and the gospel of salvation brought a change. Suffering now was observed in a new light. Jesus learned obedience and became perfect through suffering (Heb. 2:10; 5:8). He not only suffered physically, but He also healed diseases and relieved suffering. He was acquainted with the pains of humanity and felt their need. The Church continued His task after Him in direct healing according as the gift of God was available to them, and comforted all those who were afflicted (I Cor. 12:9; II Cor. 1:3, 4). Suffering with Christ, then, became an essential element for salvation (Rom. 8:17; Phil. 3:10). To share a sorrow or pain with the Man of Sorrows was to heal it. Never was suf-

fering borne with such dignity as by the disciples of Jesus (II Cor. 4:8; Acts 5:41). The pain the Christians bore as part of their witness to the world brought them rejoicing, for they knew that as they suffered with Christ for the cause of truth so they would share in His glory (II Cor. 1:5; Col. 1:24; II Tim. 2:12; I Pet. 4:13).

Pain is often the lot of the Christian. It belongs to the pre-kingdom age and therefore must be borne temporarily; however, the brevity of the trial is frequently appealed to as an element of encouragement (Rom. 8:18; II Cor. 4:17; I Pet. 1:6). When in the early Church persecution was inevitable they lifted their eyes to the world to come where "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain" (Rev. 21:4).

In like manner, the fear of death gripped the world. In that age, demands for assurance of immortality were loud and insistent. This profound need of man was met, not with speculation, but with fact: "*Christ is risen*" (I Cor. 15:13, 16, 20). As Christ died and was raised from the dead, so His followers were promised a like deliverance. To the believer the power of death was destroyed, and it became merely as a brief interval of sleep. Believing this, death to them had no more terrors. The final victory, however, comes when their salvation is consummated at the return of Christ and the Resurrection. Then death shall be "swallowed up in victory" (I Cor. 15:54). This anticipation is not a false hope. It was real then, and it is real now to the believer. *Salvation in its fullest sense means the banishment, in the end, of all suffering, pain and death.*

Deliverance from the World's Doom

This present evil world is not of the Father, and since there is no hope for it, it is doomed to destruction. The only hope for mankind is the replacement of this order by another in which other powers bear sway and other relations prevail. Salvation in its fullest sense comes with the ushering in of the new order, the Kingdom of God. The early Christians looked to the future. They frequently spoke of an event which is about to be ushered in, whose date cannot be fixed, but which stands imminent to the faith and awe of believers (Rom. 13:11, 12; I Thess. 5:8; Heb. 9:28; I Pet. 1:5).

With the knowledge of things to come Christians cannot stand by as idle spectators of the world's tragedy. In the interval before Jesus' return they have a mission to fulfill. Not only has the Christian to prepare himself; he has also to bear witness of the ministry of Jesus, and assist in winning men to His allegiance. They must watch and wait for the coming Kingdom, and as an accompaniment of waiting, they must pray. The Church must direct its requests for all things pertaining to the Kingdom. We need not expect the Kingdom to come to an unwatchful or a prayerless Church. The power is God's, and man's praying for the Kingdom demonstrates his desire to receive it, and to escape the fate of those who oppose it.

Thus we see salvation is meaningful. From the moment an individual hears the gospel message and believes it, he begins a new life. As he advances in knowledge and understanding he is delivered from the darkness and superstition that enthralls the world. As he progresses in

obedience to God's requirements he becomes free from sin and moral corruption that exists about him. He learns to bear suffering and pain; he learns to face death unafraid. And finally, at the appearing of the Lord from heaven he is granted life for evermore. Without the gift of immortality all other benefits, valuable and enjoyable as they are for this present life, are of little consequence, for with death unconquered, the ending is bitter. Life, therefore, eternal life, is the crowning glory of salvation.

Next Issue: KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST ESSENTIAL

Prayer Will Help

Have you burdens too heavy to carry;
Many trials too hard to withstand?
Does the help that you need seem to tarry,
With no one to offer a hand?
Have you struggled alone with your crosses,
No other soul seeming to care?
There is One who can make up your losses,
If you tell Him about them in prayer.

Are you often beset by temptations,
With no one but worldlings around?
Do fondest hopes turn to frustrations?
With such the world seems to abound.
Oh, friend; from your dungeon be lifted!
Arise from the depths of despair!
Assurance that clouds will be rifted
Is given, when sought for in prayer.

There is solace in prayer for the weary,
Those weary of sin's heavy hand;
Who, finding the way to be dreary,
Are seeking a heavenly land.
If willing and anxious to sever
The ties of destruction and doom;
There is One who will hear, and deliver:
Whose radiance will lighten your gloom.

So, when you arise in the morning,
Refreshed by your hours of repose,
Let prayer be your inner adorning;
A meek, humble spirit disclose.
And then, with thanksgiving ascending,
Ask Him to give help for the day,
That you may be strong till its ending,
To smile all your troubles away.

At noontime and night, still believing
The help that is needed is near,
Be constant. If joyful, or grieving,
Your plea He is certain to hear.
Though often your vessel is battered,
And you long for the sun to appear,
You will find your clouds frequently scattered
By the sunbeams you gather from prayer.
—L. L. S.

Man strives for glory, honor, fame,
That all the world may know his name.
Amasses wealth by brain and hand;
Becomes a power in the land.
But when he nears the end of life
And looks back o'er the years of strife,
He finds that happiness depends
On none of these, but love of friends.
—Sel.

DANGER: Engage Brain Before Opening Mouth

UPON entering one of our city buildings this sign greets the eye. We are all familiar with many warning signals. However most of them are warnings for our personal safety or for the preservation of property. But this unique sign alerts one to the preservation of character, peace and happiness. Trouble without end could be saved if only we would form the habit of thinking well before speaking.

"The heart of the righteous studieth to answer." They engage their mind first and then their tongue. Their head is Christ, the truth. "The head of every man [every faithful one] is Christ." His thoughts rule and govern their conversation and actions. Like the virtuous woman, the opening of their mouth is with wisdom.

"Danger! Engage brain before opening mouth." If we could keep a mental picture of such a motto hanging before us at all times it would help keep us in touch with God. We are really never out of the danger zone until our thoughts become completely transformed and we have the mind of Christ. All the saints whom John saw in his vision of the new world were beheaded ones, their own ideas completely gone and replaced with thoughts of God which are as far above ours as heaven is above earth.

The Bible contains many danger signals:

"Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge." Such a one speaks without engaging the mind of Christ. How natural to respond affirmatively to a proposition that appears to hold material advantages, without first considering the long range effect on our spiritual well being, or that of the brotherhood who might be influenced by our choice. In other words, we open our mouth before we engage the mind of Christ. Again the Wise Man repeats the same danger signal: "Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go: lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul."

"Evil communications corrupt good manners." In other words, "Bad company is the ruin of good character." There can be no compromise with sinners and contact invites compromise. Evil is contagious—much more so than good. Therefore, "enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away." This signal warns of the danger of tampering with any evil. Strong men standing on quicksand start sinking sooner or later. They may try desperate measures as they go down, but it is too late then.

"Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath." "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few." How humble we should be and let God direct us in the proper way. For untold ages He has been successful in His business of training and developing mortals into angels. We cannot improve on His plan but we can do much to improve ourselves so we can take some humble part in His eternal plan.

"Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man." If we do not have this grace or mind of Christ governing our conversation we shall be endangering the spir-

itual welfare of those around us. We shall be committing two offenses: transgressing ourselves and leading someone else astray.

Paul set a danger signal flashing when he said not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think, but to "think soberly." Paul, with his many churches, knew that not one of us would go by this dangerous place in safety without obeying the warning, for he said it to "every one of our number." It is a dangerous thing to begin to exalt self in any degree. Mighty angels bow before the great Jehovah; should not mortals do the same? It has well been said that a Christian is like ripening grain: the riper he becomes the more lowly he bows his head. Observation teaches us that this humility is an outstanding indicator of a Christian's maturity.

"Never let the world mold you into their way of thinking." Too often our thought molds are miserably small and set. Here is an important place for a danger signal. A Christian must employ Christ's thought mold, and thus enlarge and transform his own. Christ engaged the mind of the Father. When He opened His mouth He gave "living water" to His hearers. He did not speak His own words but the words of the Father which sent Him. Actually there are only two thought molds: that of the world, and the Father. Which mind are we engaging as we approach these danger signals?

When we cannot feel sin, that is the greatest danger of all. It is at this point that the trumpet of the Lord's watchman sounds to alert us to the danger we have failed to see. This is a sort of shock treatment to bring us to our senses when they have become dull because of inactivity and we fail to discern between the good and evil.

Recently while listening to a conversation by a representative for an investment firm, I was amazed to learn what a regular monthly saving—for instance of a hundred dollars for fifteen years at interest—would accumulate. In like manner our good deeds will compound interest for our eternal reward. But here, too, is a danger signal. Every time we draw our pleasure in forbidden channels, it lessens our reward appreciably. Christ obtained the highest reward, as promised King of the whole earth, because He lost no time in conquering sin. Today we can increase or diminish our reward as we choose, by quick resistance to evil or by prolonged indulgence.

There is danger in this age that we settle for an easier way than the best of which we are capable. There is also danger that we relax the tension of zealous Christian living and desire some of our natural ways. By such action we reduce the full reward for which we entered the Lord's service with enthusiasm, and compromise for a partial reward.

All the faithful who stand with the Great Shepherd on Mount Zion have attained such an attitude that not only their lips and lives agree, but they all agree with the Head. They have the Father's name or Word in their foreheads and have used it so efficiently that in their mouth is found no guile.

The man who trusts men will make fewer mistakes than the one who distrusts them.

The Soft Answer

"I'LL give him law to his heart's content; the scoundrel," said Mr. Singleton, walking backwards and forwards, in a state of angry excitement.

"Don't call harsh names, Mr. Singleton," said Lawyer Trueman, looking up from the mass of papers before him, and smiling in a quiet, benevolent way.

"Every man should be known by his true name. Williams is a scoundrel, and so he ought to be called," replied the client with increased warmth.

"Did you call him a scoundrel before you received his reply to your last letter?" asked the lawyer.

"No, I did not. But that letter confirmed my previously formed impressions of his character."

"But I cannot find in that letter any evidence proving your late partner to be a dishonest man—he will not agree to your proposed method of settlement, because he does not see it to be the most proper way."

"He won't agree to it, because it is an honorable and equitable method of settlement—that's all!" responded Mr. Singleton, still excited.

"There you are decidedly wrong," said the lawyer. "You have both allowed yourselves to become angry, and if I must speak plainly, I think you the most unreasonable in the present case. Two angry men never can settle any business properly. You have very unnecessarily increased the difficulties in the way of a speedy settlement, by writing Mr. Williams an angry letter, to which he has responded in a like unhappy temper. Now, if I am to settle this business for you, I must write all letters that pass to Mr. Williams in future."

"Well, let me answer this letter," said Mr. Singleton, "and after that I promise that you shall have your own way."

"No," said Mr. Trueman, "I shall consent to no such thing. It is the reply to that letter which is to modify the negotiation for a settlement, in such a way as to bring success, or failure; and I have no idea of allowing you, in the present state of your mind, to write such a one as will most assuredly defeat an amicable arrangement."

After some pause Singleton replied, "Indeed I must write this letter. There are some things I want to say to him, which I know you won't write."

"There is in the Bible," said Mr. Trueman, "a passage peculiarly applicable to the present case. It is this; 'A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger.' I have found this precept in a life that has numbered more than double your years, to be one that may be safely and honorably adopted in all cases. You blame Mr. Williams for writing you an angry letter, and are indignant at certain expressions therein contained. Now is it any more right for you, than for him, to write an angry letter with cutting epithets?"

"Well, I suppose, then, I shall have to submit. When will it be ready?"

"Come this afternoon, and I will give you the draft, which you can copy and sign."

In the afternoon Mr. Singleton came, and received the letter prepared by Mr. Trueman. It ran thus—"I regret that my proposition did not meet your approval. The mode of settlement which I suggested was the result of

a careful consideration of our mutual interests. Be kind enough to suggest to Mr. Trueman, my lawyer, the plan which you would think best. You may rely upon my consent to it, if it meets his approbation."

"Is it possible, Mr. Trueman, that you expect me to sign such a cringing letter as that?" throwing it down and walking backwards and forwards with great irritation of manner.

"Well, what is your objection to it?" asked Mr. Trueman, mildly.

"Objection! How can you ask such a question? Am I to go on my knees to him, and beg him to do me justice? No! I'll sacrifice every cent I've got in the world first, the scoundrel!"

"You wish to have your business settled, do you not?" asked Mr. Trueman, looking him steadily in the face.

"Of course I do, *honorably* settled."

"Well, let me hear what you mean by an honorable settlement."

"Why I mean—" the young man hesitated a moment.

The lawyer said, "You mean a settlement in which your interest shall be equally considered with that of Mr. Williams?"

"Yes certainly, and that—"

"And that," continued Mr. Trueman, "Mr. Williams shall consider, and treat you as a gentleman."

"But I'll never send that mean cringing letter though."

"You mistake its whole tenor, I do assure you, Mr. Singleton. You certainly carefully considered the proposed basis of settlement before you adopted it, did you not?"

"Of course, I did."

"So the letter which I have prepared for you states. Now I am sure you are willing to grant him the same privilege which you ask for yourself—that of proposing a plan of settlement. Your proposition does not seem to please him; now it is but fair that he should be invited to state how he wishes the settlement to be made."

"I can't say that I am convinced by what you say; but as you seem bent on having it your own way, let me copy the thing, and sign it," said the young man, suddenly changing his manner.—"There now!" passing across the table the brief letter he had copied, "I suppose he'll think me a low spirited fellow, after he gets that. But he's mistaken. After it's all over, I'll take good care to tell him that it didn't contain my sentiments."

Mr. Trueman smiled as he took the letter, and went on to fold and direct it.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Singleton," said the lawyer, as that gentleman entered his office on the following day.

"Good afternoon," responded the young man. "Well, have you heard from that milk-and-water letter of yours? I can't call it mine."

"Yes, here is the answer. Take a seat and I will read it to you," said the old gentleman.

"Well, let's hear it."

"Dear George—I have your kind, reasonable, and gentlemanly note of yesterday, in reply to my harsh, unreasonable, and ungentlemanly one of the day before. We have both been playing the fool; but you are ahead of me

in becoming sane. I have examined more carefully, since I got your note, the tenor of your proposition for a settlement, and it meets my views precisely. My foolish anger kept me from seeing it before. Let our mutual friend, Mr. Trueman, arrange the matter according to the plan mentioned, and I shall most heartily acquiesce. Yours, &c."

"He never wrote that letter in the world!" exclaimed Singleton, starting to his feet.

"You know his writing, I presume?" said Mr. Trueman, handing him the letter.

"It is Thomas Williams' own hand as I live!" ejaculated Singleton, on glancing at the letter, "my old friend Thomas Williams, the best-natured fellow in the world!" he continued, his feeling undergoing a sudden and entire revolution. "What a fool I've been!"

"And what a fool I have been," said Williams, advancing from an adjoining room, at the same time extending his hand to Singleton.

"Heaven bless you, my old friend!" exclaimed Singleton, grasping his hand, "Why, what has been the matter of us both?"

"My good friends," said old Mr. Trueman, "I have known you long, and have always esteemed you both. This pleasant meeting and reconciliation, you perceive, is of my arrangement. Now let me give you a precept that will both make you friends, and keep you friends. It has been my motto through life, and I don't know that I have an enemy in the world. It is this—'A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger.'"

(From an old Fourth Reader, published about 1860)

PEACE

IN THE Pacific Ocean grows a marine plant which rises from a depth of one hundred and fifty to two hundred feet, and floats on its great breakers. The stem of this plant is less than an inch thick; yet it grows and thrives and holds its own against the fierce smitings and pressures of breakers which no masses of rock, however hard, could long withstand.

What is the secret of this marvelous resiliency and endurance? How can this slender plant face the fury of the elements so successfully, and in spite of the storm and tempests keep its hold, and perpetuate itself from century to century?

The answer is: It reaches down into the still depths where it fixes its grasp, after the fashion of the instinct that has been put into it, to the naked rocks, and no commotion of the water can shake it from its fastenings.

When a man has deep and inner clings to God, when the roots of his life go down and take hold on God, mere surface agitation and pressures will not overcome him. He may be floated here and there within a given sweep like a plant bosomed on the sea, and there may be times when it is very rough and the strain is great, but he will survive it all and preserve his integrity.

A true Christian is not a fair-weather Christian but his peace is a tough-fibered kind of peace that can stand anything that can happen and thrive midst it all. Our peace comes in yielding to His will in everything. If gathering our strength from the calm depth of God's promises, the

trials and storms will cause us to send our roots deeper and deeper until we become rooted and grounded in the faith. If we stiffen ourselves against the trials we shall be broken, but if we yield to His will and allow everything that comes to make us more pliable, nothing will be able to separate us from the solid foundation. We will work continually to keep vigorously alive in the faith.

Storms may rage about us and carry us hither and yon but over the dashing billows comes the reassuring voice of the Master, "My peace I give unto thee." Jesus spoke those consoling words as the storms were lashing about Him, even to the threatening of His life. His peace was perfect for He was perfectly reconciled to His Father.

The early Christians faced fiery trials and persecutions; they were stoned, sawn assunder, yet so deeply rooted were they on the Rock of Ages that amid the trials they never wavered but drank from the calm depth of their faith. They were buffeted severely but never broken.

We who live in the cool of the day, surrounded by such favorable conditions—can we not go forth with rejoicing and serve Him with a perfect heart, willing to comply with every commandment? Peace of mind breaks down if at the center of it is eating the worm of doubt. When we have inward peace, nothing from without can ruffle it.

How is our peace? Do we allow angry passions to convulse our soul? Does jealousy or covetousness destroy our peace of mind? Do we wish that certain things were not necessary to perform, thinking the demand is too great? Are we so engrossed in our daily tasks that little time is left for spiritual meditation, no time to search deep within to see what is disturbing our peace?

Isaiah tells us that which brings peace. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee." And Paul continued, "Whatever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, think on these things." Among the things the inspired writer suggests thinking upon, not one is negative; all are positive. If we constantly think upon the untrue, the dishonest, injustice, impurity, the ugly, the things of evil report, vice, and the unpraiseworthy, then the very disharmony of these things will invade and pervade. Our peace will be gone. But if you do as Paul suggests, then "the God of peace shall be with you." When sin enters, peace is driven out. Never can we enjoy perfect peace until the last particle of sin is erased from our lives.

The Psalmist told us what destroys peace when he sang, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak; for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly."

A missionary said in a round-table conference: "God and I are not getting on very well together. We seem to be at cross-purposes, and my life is getting more and more dull and unhappy and restless." Of course, for if we won't live in harmony with God, we can't live in harmony with ourselves. But when we have no discord with God, we have no discord with ourselves. Peace reigns.

Did not Paul have inward peace when he said triumphantly, "the last drops of my sacrifice are now falling," and he knew a crown awaited him?

When at last the storms are at rest, when we no longer are tempest-tossed by trials, when we have yielded to Him and His peace becomes ours, then throughout the countless ages of eternity we shall continue to feed from the depths of God's wisdom and have peace, lasting peace.

HABITS

MAN would be in a sorry plight if he were unable to form habits. Everything he did would require watchful attention. Washing, dressing, and eating would occupy all of his time. At the end of the day he would be exhausted by the continuous effort of concentration on the petty details of every action.

But fortunately for us, we can develop habits. Any act often repeated soon forms a habit; and habit continued, steadily gains in strength. Intelligent practice develops perfection for good; careless practice develops habits of wrong which have to be unlearned before good ones can be developed. Practice, whether right or wrong, makes permanent. Therefore we must be strictly careful about the habits we practice or develop.

Bad habits at first may be as the spider's web, easily broken through, but if not resisted they soon bind us with chains of steel, and a vigorous effort will be required to break them.

We who have been called out of the prison house of darkness and have made the practicing of God's Word our main object in life must exercise great care in forming habits of thinking and acting that will aid in our spiritual growth. The knowledge of nature's laws, acquired by man through observation, experience, and study, even though helpful, is a mere trifle compared with God's infinite wisdom. He tells us in unmistakable terms how weak and naturally prone to evil we are and commands us to begin at once to amend our ways and our doings, for we cannot change our character in a moment. If the Day of Reckoning overtakes us and no real work is finished, it will be too late. *Now* it is within the power of everyone to exercise his will to break the cord that holds him as a slave to wrong habit.

Professor James once said: "Could the young but realize how soon they would become mere walking bundles of habits, they would give more heed to their conduct while in the plastic state. We are spinning our own fates, good or evil, and never to be undone. The only safe rule is: Put all the strength you can into the act that is to become a habit. Seize the first opportunity to act on your newly made resolution and allow no exception to occur until the old habit is broken and the new one is firmly rooted in your life."

The Apostle Paul must have realized the necessity of forming good habits and practices when he wrote, "Meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them that thy profiting may appear to all." If we wish to have actions that will carry us through to eternity we must meditate on the grander and nobler things of life. The human mind cannot create anything. It produces nothing until it has been fertilized by experience and meditation. Its acquisitions are the germs of its productions.

Sow an act, and you reap a habit; sow a habit, and you reap a character; sow a character, and you reap a destiny. So it should be our ambition to sow acts of love, kindness, and truth; then we shall reap a good habit, a perfect character, and a glorious destiny.

The way to gain a good reputation is to endeavor to be what you desire to appear.

OBITUARY

SUSAN VAN GROL

On Monday, September 22, funeral services were conducted for our sister, Susan Van Grol, by the Rev. Percy J. Thatcher at the Winchell Funeral Home, Rochester, N. Y. Sister Van Grol was one of our oldest members, having been affiliated with the Megiddo Mission Church since 1912 where she attended regularly as circumstances and health permitted. The good news of the Kingdom always brought light to her countenance and joy to her heart.

Sister Van Grol was born in Holland, April 2, 1876, the daughter of Adrian and Frances Coleward Cuvilier. On Dec. 18, 1894 she was united in marriage to John Van Grol. She leaves to mourn her loss two sons, John and Wilbur Van Grol, both of Rochester; four daughters, Susan Van Bortel, Edna Hellis, Sadie Mayer, and Dorothy Garrity, all of Rochester; a sister, Mrs. A. W. Fisher of Marion, N. Y.; 18 grandchildren, and many friends and neighbors.

We would point the bereaved to the Scriptures of truth and to their Author, the "God of all consolation and comfort," who is able to save to the uttermost all who call upon Him in sincerity and in truth.

DON'T JUDGE OTHERS TOO HARSHLY

Pray do not find fault with the man who limps, or stumbles along the road,
Unless you have worn the shoes he wears, or struggled beneath his load.

There may be tacks in his shoes that hurt, though hidden away from view.
Or the burden he bears, placed on your back, might cause you to stumble, too.

Don't sneer at the man who's down today, unless you have felt the blow
That caused his fall, or felt the shame that only the fallen know.

You may be strong, but still the blows that were his, if dealt to you,
In the self-same way at the self-same time, might cause you to stagger, too.

Don't be harsh with the man who sins, or pelt him with word and stone,
Unless you are sure, yea doubly sure, that you have no sins of your own.

For, you know, perhaps, if the tempter's voice should whisper as soft to you,
As it did to him when he went astray, 'twould cause you to falter, too!

—Selected.

"My presence shall go with thee,
And I will give thee rest."
Oh, words of strength and beauty!
Oh, hope and joy possess!
His presence will go with me,
Then wherefore should I fear?
In cloud or fiery pillar,
My God is ever near.

—Sel.

Meditations

On the Word

"For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself" (Romans 14: 7).

It is well for Christians to understand the weakness which is inherent in their very strength. While the narrow way to salvation may and does attract many who prove to be double-minded and unstable—"the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, which gathered of every kind"—those who survive the winnowing of the years and the stern discipline of the high calling are certain to be men and women of strong character.

Human nature has changed little over the centuries, and the letters of St. Paul reveal that some of our familiar problems existed in his day. Food restrictions have been a feature of nearly all religions from the earliest times, and there have always been those who would make the Kingdom of God a matter of meat and drink (v. 17). In Paul's day there was constant pressure from the Judaizers who would enforce the dietary rules of the obsolete Mosaic law, but there were also, the out-and-out diet faddists who insisted on prescribing for their neighbors. The vegetarian question, that hardy perennial, had reared its head, and in regard to this, together with other points of contention, the apostle was writing.

This intolerance, this judging and despising over non-essentials, he tells them, is not brotherly, nor is it Christian. There are more important things to concern ourselves with. For this matter of eating and drinking, there is a broad but definite rule in I Cor. 10: 31, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." This leaves the responsibility with every man's individual conscience.

But this liberty, he warns, is not always to be used, there is something still higher which curbs and controls it. The weak brother's scruples are not to be ignored or ridiculed, but treated with understanding and consideration while he is struggling with his own problems. "All things are lawful for me," said the same apostle, "but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not" (I Cor. 10: 23). That is the test—does it edify? To practice this form of self-denial for the sake of example and influence is the highest form of unselfishness; this is laying down our lives for the brethren (I John 3: 16). "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

It was upon this principle that Paul admonished his Roman brethren in this matter: "Let us not therefore judge one another any more; but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way. . . . It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak. . . . Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another" (ch. 14: 13, 21, 19).

This thought must govern every act of the Christian's life, every word he speaks, even the thoughts which un-

derlie his speech and conduct. It goes far beyond the matter of food and drink and clothing, of taste and manners; it is a serious business upon which depends our own salvation and that of our brother. We are One World, "one body in Christ, and every one members one of another" (Rom. 12: 5).

Everything in life has its price. The benefits of civilization, the rule of law and order, all require some measure of sacrifice, of self-denial, of restriction of our individuality. The services and conveniences of community life cannot be had without the taxes which make them possible. So also the blessings of the Christian community, the highest form of civilization ever known on earth, have their price—a price which few are willing to pay.

The price of this Divine unity and fellowship is a constant self-denial; not only a denial of all ungodliness and every worldly lust (Titus 2: 12), but at times a giving up for the sake of example of things which in themselves might be lawful. Love "never insists upon her rights" (I Cor. 13: 5, Goodspeed). The rugged individualist who insists upon his "rights," regardless of the feelings or opinions or the effect upon others, is no part of the body of Christ, which is so exquisitely and sensitively fashioned that when one member suffers, all suffer with it, and the rejoicing of each is likewise shared (I Cor. 12: 14—27). To one who has experienced the fullness of this fellowship, the price is small indeed. It is a way of life which every right-thinking man or woman should find satisfying; it is true civilization.

It is impossible to overestimate the power of our example or the extent of our influence, because we are usually unaware of its workings. In our own lives, consciously or unconsciously, we daily follow some pattern of conduct, and we are likewise setting a pattern for others. "None of us liveth to himself"—not one. Beyond question there are individuals in this world whose lives are utterly without significance, to themselves or anyone else; but they are not the people who have conformed their lives to the pattern Christ left as an example. But each of us counts for something; may it be for good.

How many times a long-forgotten remark has come back to us when a friend says, "I never forgot what you said to me on such an occasion." Do we hear these words with pleasure or with shame?

"I shot an arrow into the air,

It fell to the earth, I knew not where."

Nor shall we ever know fully the good or evil our words and acts have done to others until the Day of Judgment. It behooves us, then, to be strictly careful about the lives we lead (Eph. 5: 15, Moffatt), to watch ever more closely the words which will either justify or condemn us.

We cannot live to ourselves, nor do we die to ourselves. We are One World. If we die the death of the righteous, slaying the "old man," dying to sin, crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts (Num. 23: 10; Rom. 6: 6, 10; Gal. 5: 24), our brethren are bound to be ennobled and inspired to holier living. Imagine, if you can, trying to be a Christian with no living example before our eyes! And on the other hand, if we grow weary in well doing, if we become "twice dead" in trespasses and sins, our backsliding is certain to injure and discourage our weaker brother. We cannot evade or escape our responsibility; let us then accept it joyfully as good servants of the grace of God.

Your Questions Answered



BIBLICAL

PERSONAL

CURRENT

Do you have a question? Personal replies to Biblical questions will be sent to any correspondent, and counsel will be offered on problems pertaining to the spiritual life. The MEGIDDO MESSAGE will publish only the most helpful discussions for the benefit of other readers. No names shall be mentioned.

Will you please explain Genesis 32: 25 concerning Jacob's thigh being out of joint?

This followed an all-night encounter with the angel who, being unable to prevail, smote Jacob on the thigh. We do not believe this to have been a physical encounter, but rather a mental struggle in which Jacob wrestled with the opposing forces of his mind. Such a struggle would be natural, for Jacob was returning to the land of his nativity and was to meet Esau the next day. Would Esau's wrath have fully abated during Jacob's twenty years' absence? Or would he still seek to wreak vengeance upon his brother? And what of himself? The blessing of the birthright had been given to him instead of Esau by God's foreknowledge of his superior character. Was his character developed adequately? During those twenty years with his uncle, he had often been victim of Laban's trickery and deception; this, possibly to reveal a weakness in his own character. Perhaps his own heart was not perfect on this point. In the matter of the birthright, he was the rightful heir as his mother knew. But was his attitude toward his brother absolutely right? or was there some egotistical reaction which God disdains, some personal satisfaction in his having supplanted him? Was he now humble as all great men must be?

Such was the warfare which continued till the break of day. Jacob prevailed—right conquered. But evidently God deemed it necessary to leave with the man a physical reminder of past spiritual infirmity, lest he slip into transgression. "And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh."

Please explain Hosea 12: 3 where we read that Jacob took his brother by the heel in the womb.

Jacob means "supplanter." The fact that Jacob was to supplant his brother in the matter of the birthright may have been thus foreshadowed at the birth of the twins to instruct Rebecca by whose ingenuity the matter was to be manipulated. In dressing Jacob in Esau's clothing and sending him to Isaac with the savory meat, Rebecca was carrying out the Lord's will. Esau had sold the birthright, it was rightfully Jacob's and she was intent upon just disposition of it. Nor was Jacob a deceiver in claiming a possession which Esau had agreed should be his. If at the time Jacob's heart was not altogether right in the matter (as may well have been the case in his immaturity), we know that he was superior to Esau and that ultimately he developed a character which will classify him with Abraham and Isaac in the Kingdom of God (Luke 13: 28); while Esau is considered "a profane person" by the writer of Hebrews (12: 16, 17), and is representative of the unfaithful class. See Obadiah.

Please comment on the Mormon hierarchy. Is it a system sanctioned, approved and delegated by God?

The Mormon hierarchy is complicated. There is the Melchisedec or higher priesthood which has to do with

spiritual affairs, the proclamation of the gospel, as well as exercising administrative, legislative and judicial functions. Then there is the Aaronic or lesser priesthood which has to do mainly with the collection of tithes, the distribution of charities, the general care of the church's properties and the administration of the outward ordinances of the gospel, baptism by immersion and the administration of the Lord's Supper.

The top rank in the Melchisedec priesthood is occupied by a president chosen in a general assembly. He has two counselors. These may be against him in counsel but never in final decisions. For the whole church the president is prophet, seer, and revelator, and his authority is absolute. Under this first presidency there are twelve apostles, then the seventy, next patriarchs and high priests. Faith in God is the beginning of the Mormon religion, and according to their belief confers spiritual gifts such as healings, miracles, tongues, the interpretation of tongues, discernment, visions, dreams, prophecy, and revelation. Authority to administer in the name of the Deity must of necessity come from God, and the gift of the Holy Spirit is bestowed by the laying on of hands. The Mormon religion cannot be defined in a written creed. It is added to by the revelations of God as the capacities of the Saints enlarge and the needs of the Church increase. Revelations for the whole Church are given only through its President.

Is this system approved by God? The Bible teaches the continuance of the Melchisedec priesthood, with Christ as High Priest—no earthly counterpart. See Hebrews 7. Direct divine revelation in this age is not a part of God's plan, for the Scriptures are a complete guide to salvation (II Tim. 3: 16, 17). Any attempted additions to the Scriptures invite the curse of God (Rev. 22: 18). With the completion of the Scriptures, direct revelation from God ceased and with it Holy Spirit power which was given to confirm the Word by the signs of healing, miracles, tongues, etc. (I Cor. 13: 8—13). The apostles of our Lord could impart Holy Spirit power by the laying on of hands (I Tim. 4: 14), but that power ceased with them. All who claim to be their successors are spurious because they have no part in the foundation of the Holy City with the original Twelve (Rev. 21: 14).

As for the system of hierarchy today, the Book is specific: "Be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ" (Matt. 23: 8—10).

Can you impart any light on the phrase in the Lord's Prayer, "Lead us not into temptation"?

In Wilson's *Emphatic Diaglott* this is rendered "abandon us not to trial but preserve us from evil." And the recent Lamsa translation, (a translation of the early Aramaic Scriptures), renders this, "Do not let us enter into temptation." God never leads anyone into temptation, but He has promised that He "will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape that ye may be able to bear it" (I Cor. 10: 13).

Gems of Life for Youth

CHARACTER

"Put on the character of the Lord Jesus Christ"
(Romans 13: 14, Moffatt).

CHARACTER is one of the greatest motive powers in the world. In its noblest embodiments it exemplifies human nature in its highest forms, for it exhibits man at his best. It is the cornerstone of individual greatness. Character is to a man what a fly-wheel is to the engine. By the force of its momentum it carries him through times of temptation and trial; it steadies him in times of popular excitement and tumult, and exerts a guiding and controlling influence over his life.

When a person has lost character all is lost—all peace of mind, all complacency in himself, are fled forever. He despises himself; he is despised by his fellow men. Within is shame and remorse; without, neglect and reproach. He is of necessity a miserable and useless man, even though he may be clad in purple and fare sumptuously. It is better to be poor; it is better to be reduced to beggary; it is better to be cast into prison or condemned to slavery than to be destitute of a good name or endure the pains and evils of a conscious worthlessness of character.

Where character is made a secondary object sensualism and crime prevail. He who enters upon any study, pursuit, amusement, pleasure, habit, or course of life, without considering its effects upon his character is not a trusty or an honest man. Just as a man prizes his character so is he.

There is a difference between character and reputation. Character is what a man is; reputation is what he is thought to be. Character is within; reputation is without. Character is always real; reputation may be false. Character is substantial and enduring; reputation may be vapory and fleeting. Character is at home; reputation is abroad. Character is in a man's own soul; reputation is in the minds of others. Character is solid food of life; reputation is the dessert. Character is what gives a man value in his own eyes; reputation is what he is valued at in the eyes of others. Character is his real worth; reputation is his market price. A man may have a good character and a bad reputation; or, a man may have a good reputation and a bad character, as we form our opinion of men from what they appear to be, and not from what they really are. Most men are more anxious about their reputation than they are about their character. This is not right. While every man

should endeavor to maintain a good reputation, he should especially labor to possess a good character. Our true happiness depends not so much on what is thought of us by others as on what we really are in ourselves. Men of good character are generally men of good reputation, but this is not always the case, as the motives and actions of the best of men are sometimes misunderstood and misrepresented. But it is important above everything else that we be right and do right, whether our motives and actions are properly understood and appreciated or not. Nothing can be so important to any man as the formation and possession of good character.

Character is of slow but steady growth, and the smallest child and the humblest and weakest individual may attain heights that now seem inaccessible by constant and patient exercise. The faithful discharge of daily duty, the simple integrity of purpose and power of life that all can attain with effort, contribute silently but surely to the building up of a moral character that knows no limit to its power, no bounds to its heroism. The influences which operate in the formation of character are numerous, and however trivial some of them may appear they are not to be despised. The most powerful forces in nature are those that operate silently and imperceptibly. So it is with the forces that create character, good or bad.

The secret thought never expressed, the inward indulgence in imaginary wrong, the lie never told for want of courage, the licentiousness never indulged in for fear of public rebuke, the irreverence of the heart, are just as effectual in staining the heart as though the world knew all about them.

Our minds are given us, but our characters we make. God gives the mind; man makes the character.

Not only is character of importance to its possessor as the means of conferring upon him true dignity and worth, but it exerts an influence upon the lives of all within its pale, the importance of which can never be overestimated. We are molding others wherever we are. Books are only useful when they are read; sermons are only influential when they are listened to; but character keeps itself at all times before men's attention, and its weight is felt by every one who comes within its sphere.

Sum it up as we will, character is the great desideratum of human life. This truth, sublime in its simplicity and powerful in its beauty, is the highest lesson of religion, the first that youth should learn, and the last that age should forget.

